

## **Narrative**

### **Introduction**

Commanding Officer, Naval Base (NAVBASE) Kitsap submits this nomination for the Chief of Naval Operations Environmental Planning Team Award for the Pier and Support Facilities for Transit Protection System (TPS) at U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) Air Station/Sector Field Office Environmental Assessment (EA). The EA was developed to provide a staging location for TPS vessels and crews that escort Navy submarines from Naval Base Kitsap Bangor to and from their dive/surface points in the Strait of Juan de Fuca. The team, referred to hereafter as the TPS Port Angeles EA team, faced significant challenges in the development of the EA including public concern over the construction of Navy facilities in Port Angeles, loss of a regionally significant recreational diving location, impacts to an Atlantic salmon aquaculture farm, Navy construction on non-Navy property, and impacts to tribal and treaty resources on Ediz Hook, which is considered to be a traditional cultural property by the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe.

The primary environmental planning goal was to prepare a thorough, comprehensive, and legally defensible EA to support project construction contract award in fiscal year 2016 and start of construction in the 2016/2017 in-water work window. The team developed an extensive agenda of environmental planning objectives and required timelines integral to the success of meeting this goal. Active and early engagement with stakeholders including the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe, Icicle Seafoods, Port Angeles dive community, Puget Sound Pilots Association, and the City of Port Angeles was the key to resolving potentially controversial issues early in the process. Close coordination with regulators from National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Headquarters, NMFS West Coast Region, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and the Washington State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) greatly assisted NAVBASE Kitsap in meeting the project critical timeline.

### **Background**

#### ***Team Details Specific to This Project***

A multi-disciplinary team of experts was assembled to successfully complete the EA and associated environmental documents and consultations. Because the TPS mission is supported by the USCG's Maritime Force Protection Unit (MFPU) and the project involved construction of Navy infrastructure on a USCG installation, it was important that the team include Navy and USCG decision makers, engineers, real estate, environmental and public affairs professionals. To ensure that the TPS Port Angeles EA team worked in a cohesive manner and that all roles and responsibilities were clearly defined, Navy and USCG leadership developed a team charter, known as the "Governance Letter." The Governance Letter delineated each agency's role in preparation of NEPA documentation, responsibilities for document review, and roles in regulatory and Government to Government consultations. The Governance Letter clarified that the Navy would be the sole signatory to the NEPA decision document and would lead all consultations; and the USCG would be a non-signatory cooperating agency that would review and approve all NEPA and regulatory documentation. The Governance Letter proved invaluable to keep the project on track as existing team members transferred between duty stations and new members joined the team.

The public's concern with the perception of increasing Navy presence in the Pacific Northwest, especially at a non-Navy installation, required the team to focus on early outreach

in the Port Angeles community to identify stakeholders and to engage with these stakeholders in meaningful discussion throughout the planning process. Technical and potential legal challenges of this project required strong and decisive senior leadership and project team members who could communicate effectively both internally and externally. The team's efforts to complete multiple components of the large and complex NEPA document and associated compliance documents on a tight schedule to support the TPS Pier and Support Facilities for Transit Protection System (TPS) in Port Angeles led to the success of the project.

### ***Management Approach***

The management approach of the TPS Port Angeles EA team was threefold:

- Use the environmental planning process to engage with the public and stakeholders to ensure the planning and analysis reflects their input;
- Use the environmental planning process to drive alternatives analysis and support selection of a preferred alternative; and
- Ensure the outcome of the environmental planning process is legally defensible, fully meets the purpose and need of the project for both the Navy and USCG, and is completed within the required project timelines.

### ***Team Organization and Staffing***

To meet the environmental planning objectives and succeed under the schedule constraints, a multi-disciplinary team with knowledge of the TPS mission and experience working with a broad array of stakeholders was formed. Key team members are listed in the table below (Table 1).

<b>Table 1: Environmental Planning Team</b>		
<b>Name</b>	<b>Title/Discipline</b>	<b>Organization</b>
<b>Management Team</b>		
Mr. David Gibson	Project Manager	NAVFAC NW
Ms. Kathy Felix	TPS Program Manager	SWFPAC
CDR Charles Hawkins	MFPU Program Manager	USCG D13
Mr. Greg Leicht	Installation Environmental Program Director	NAVFAC NW / NAVBASE Kitsap
Dr. Robin Senner	NEPA Project Manager	NAVFAC NW
Mr. Ben Keasler	Former NEPA Project Manager	NAVFAC NW / NAVBASE Kitsap
Ms. Connie Callahan	Environmental Planner	USCG, CEU Oakland
<b>Counsel</b>		
Ms. Nancy Glazier	Environmental Counsel	NAVFAC NW
<b>Planning and Analysis Team</b>		
Ms. Christine Stevenson	NEPA Coordinator	NAVFAC NW
Ms. Amanda Bennett	Cultural Resources Manager	NAVFAC NW / NAVBASE Kitsap
Dr. Susan Hughes	Archaeologist	NAVFAC NW
Ms. Tiffany Nabors	Biologist	NAVFAC NW
Ms. Pam Sargeant	Coastal Engineer	NAVFAC NW
Ms. Carolyn Winters	Environmental Liaison/Tribal Council Coordinator	COMNAVREG NW
Ms. Silvia Klatman	Public Affairs Officer	NAVBASE Kitsap
Ms. Sheila Murray	Public Affairs Officer	COMNAVREG NW
Mr. Ted Lindstrom	D13 TPS Program Manager	USCG District 13

Mr. Andy Connor	Tribal Liaison	USCG District 13
Ms. Kim Anderson	Project Manager	AECOM
Ms. Julie Blakeslee	Former Project Manager	AECOM
Ms. Jennifer Weitkamp	Biological Resources Manager	Cardno TEC

### ***Description of the Proposed Action***

The EA analyzed three action alternatives for constructing a new berthing pier for up to seven TPS vessels and upland facilities including: an 8,200 square foot administrative facility with temporary living accommodations for 20 to 30 TPS crew members, a small armory for storing small arms and ammunition, a diesel storage tank and fuel distribution system, and other site improvements.

### ***Challenges and Unusual Circumstances Addressed by the Team***

The TPS Port Angeles EA team dealt with many challenges throughout the lengthy NEPA process. Working through these issues was often tedious and required many hours of coordination and communication on the part of many team members. Team efforts to take on and resolve these issues resulted in the successful completion of the TPS Port Angeles EA and associated compliance documents and permits on schedule. The following bullets describe the challenges and unusual circumstances addressed by the TPS Port Angeles EA team.

- Public Concern with increased Navy tempo and presence in the Northwest. With the Navy's Pivot to the Pacific, Navy Region Northwest has seen an increase in Navy mission needs in the Northwest area of responsibility. Increased assets and training are needed to accomplish Navy mission goals. These increases have resulted in a multitude of Navy projects in the Northwest, and a public perception of a significant mission increase/footprint increase by the Navy in the Northwest. This perception was especially heightened with the TPS Port Angeles EA project being located off Navy property.
- Loss of Regionally Significant Recreational Diving Location. Early planning and engineering efforts developed three action alternatives: western alternative, eastern alternative and existing T- Pier alternative. The western alternative appeared to provide the best engineering solution for the project by siting a floating pier at an unused jetty on the USCG station. Seaward of the jetty is an artificial reef that supports a variety of sea life. This artificial reef is a popular dive location for both local and out-of-town divers. Under the western alternative, the floating pier would have been directly over the artificial reef. Due to security restrictions for the pier and TPS vessels, diving at the reef would have been prohibited. The potential loss of this dive location would have impacted small businesses that conduct underwater dive tours of the reef and would have impacted the dive community. The affected dive community included members of city government, the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe, and the State Divers Association.
- Construction of Navy facilities on non-Navy property at the USCG base. The Proposed Action consisted of construction of new Navy facilities on USCG property, bringing in a whole host of unique issues, including NEPA compliance for two federal agencies, real estate agreements, and multiple, varied stakeholders making up the internal project team working towards approval. This relationship required both entities, the Navy and the USCG, to ensure the messages about the project were consistent, applicable, and shared with all team members for a consistent approach to the project.

- Economic Impacts to an Atlantic Salmon Aquaculture Farm. Multiple project alternative sites were located in the vicinity of existing Atlantic Salmon aquaculture pens in the Port Angeles Harbor. This created the potential for an economic impact from a new pier from both construction-related impacts (pile driving) and operational impacts of mooring vessels at the new pier and aquaculture operations. Various aspects of the potential economic impacts relating to the aquaculture farm were thoroughly described and considered in the Draft and Final EA documents.
- Impacts to Tribal Treaty Resources on Ediz Hook. The area of the project site is considered an important and potentially sensitive archaeological area, due to use by the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe. Ediz Hook has been the site of other significant cultural resources issues, and this was a key factor in the Navy's approach to the TPS Port Angeles EA project. A complete, coordinated plan was presented to the various stakeholders, and then carried out according to plan and schedule in support of the NEPA completion.

## **Summary of Accomplishments**

### ***Environmental Plans and Agreements***

The Navy initiated the environmental planning process in March 2014 and released a Draft Description of Proposed Action and Alternatives (DoPAA) for a 30-day public comment period extending from 24 January 2015 to 25 February 2015. The Navy and USCG hosted a public meeting on the DoPAA in Port Angeles on 5 February 2015 to provide information about the project and receive public comments. The Draft EA was made available for public and agency comment for a 60-day period from November 30, 2015 to January 28, 2016. During this review period, the Navy and USCG hosted a public meeting in Port Angeles to present the findings of the analysis, answer questions, and receive public comments. The Final EA was completed and the FONSI signed on 24 August 2016 by the Commander, Navy Region Northwest.

In addition to the development of the EA, a number of supporting documents were required in order to complete required regulatory consultations. These documents and associated consultations included:

- Biological Assessment to support formal Endangered Species Act (ESA) consultation (Final September 2015)
  - Final Biological Opinion issued by NMFS on 13 July 2016
  - Draft Biological Opinion issued by USFWS on 11 August 2016
  - Final Biological Opinion issued by USFWS on 21 September 2016
- Essential Fish Habitat Assessment to support Magnuson-Stevens Act consultation (Final September 2015)
  - Biological Opinion issued by NMFS on 13 July 2016
- Incidental Harassment Authorization (IHA) request to support Marine Mammal Protection Act consultation (Final September 2015)
  - Draft IHA issued by NMFS Headquarters on 10 May 2016
  - Final IHA issued by NMFS Headquarters on 20 September 2016
- Cultural Resources Review Report to support Washington State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) consultation (Final April 2016)

- No adverse effect concurrence issued by SHPO on 25 April 2016
- Coastal Zone Management Act Federal Consistency Determination (Final April 2016)
- Navy presumed concurrence due to absence of response from Ecology

### ***Most Outstanding Program Features***

- Enhanced public involvement efforts to identify stakeholders and stakeholder's concerns at the early stages of an EA process, which directly led to the development of a new alternative, which later became the alternative chosen in the FONSI by the decision maker.
- Consultation and cooperation with the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe to develop mitigation strategies and complete Government-to-Government Consultation in a timely manner with a signed Memorandum of Agreement documenting the final outcome. The project falls within the Usual and Accustomed fishing grounds of the Jamestown S'Klallam and Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribes, who were also signatories to the MOA.

### ***Unique Aspects of the Environmental Planning Effort***

- Early public involvement allowed the team to identify flaws in the original engineering solution of a floating pier and to understand significant public, agency, and tribal concerns with all of the Navy's original alternatives. The team developed a fixed pier concept that could be built at a new location on U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) Air Station/Sector Field Office that addressed the concerns of various stakeholders. This alternative was identified as the mid-western alternative and was selected as the preferred alternative, and ultimately chosen in the FONSI decision document by the Commander, Navy Region Northwest.
- A proposed project on non-Navy property and the resulting public concern about Navy mission encroachment is not a common occurrence for construction projects. The TPS Port Angeles EA had to broaden the internal project team to include varied and instrumental stakeholders to accommodate an innovative approach to completing this NEPA document. Early stakeholder involvement was also a key component of ensuring that public concerns were addressed and the EA thoroughly considered all alternatives and public issues raised during the process.
- Local government and public entities coordination, including the City of Port Angeles and the Port of Port Angeles, was also a critical and unique aspect of the TPS Port Angeles EA. The local entities that the team interacted with also informed the public outreach and involvement for the project, as they were often contacted by local media and regulators to discuss the EA. Outreach and early, continued coordination with these local entities resulted in a successful conclusion to the EA process.
- Economic considerations for a local business due to both construction and long-term impacts was a new and different issue faced by this EA. Local business concerns related to construction impacts included early commercial fish harvest, resulting in a reduction in value of the harvest. Long-term impacts were potential operational impacts of vessel movements, risk for infrastructure impacts to business property, and safety zones for TPS vessels. Multiple discussions were held with local businesses to ensure all of their

concerns were adequately and accurately addressed in the EA document and fully considered in the final decision.

### ***Objectives and Mission Attainment***

- Achieved full NEPA compliance through finalization of the EA. The EA supported the ESA Biological Opinion and MMPA IHA.
- Conducted extensive outreach to local communities and entities in Port Angeles, Washington ensuring public awareness of the TPS mission and need for new infrastructure support.
- Completed final environmental documentation and consultations prior to the construction contract award in August of 2016, enabling maximum flexibility in the construction and scheduling of pile driving activities in the 2016-2017 fish window. Completion also ensures that TPS crew members can meet their rest and recovery time requirements in between transits, and enables the safety and security of Navy submarine assets and USCG TPS staff.

Because of the success of the team, the completion of the TPS Port Angeles EA ensures that the Navy can continue to support the TPS mission by constructing new pier facilities at the USCG Air Station/Sector Field Office in compliance with all regulatory requirements. The team was able to meet all timeline requirements and schedule milestones, including the management of numerous consultation and agency requirements for MMPA, ESA, Magnuson-Stevens Act, tribal consultations and CZMA. This required daily coordination and open communication with many team members and regulators throughout the process. The dedication of the team combined with their in-depth understanding of the complex legal and environmental sensitivities were critical in meeting project and mission objectives.

The following were some of the lessons learned throughout the process:

- Engaging in timely scheduling and coordination to ensure full participation of key team members. *This was to ensure that key team members provided their input when needed in the process.*
- The need for flexibility and willingness to incorporate updates and changes despite challenging deadlines. *Flexibility by all team members, especially within Capital Improvements, to develop and design a new alternative late in the process, ensured that the resulting EA was accomplished and met the required schedule.*
- The importance of working closely and communicating with regional and local regulators and stakeholders early on. *This reduced potential issues during the EA process, and allowed comprehensive, timely completion of regulatory requirements and local awareness of the project.*
- Frequent coordination with EA team: weekly emails, bi-weekly conference calls, WebEx meetings, and in-person review meetings helped maintain flow of data. *This ensured that the team had full situational awareness at all times during the project.*
- Adaptability and openness to flexibility in the NEPA process and public outreach is required – not all strategies will work in all locations. *This enabled public outreach efforts for the EA process to occur early in the process and met the spirit of NEPA in a challenging public and regulatory environment.*

As part of the EA process, the team engaged with the public and interested parties early and often. The team regularly conducted briefs and meetings as part of the team's coordination efforts to solicit regulator, stakeholder, tribal and public inputs early in the process. These meetings and outreach efforts contributed to the successful completion of the project. In addition to meeting with various interested parties, extensive public outreach materials were developed. It was important to the team to provide outreach materials that educated the public on the Navy mission and the strategic importance of and need for TPS facilities in the Port Angeles area as well as the Navy's commitment to protect natural and cultural resources.

#### ***Specific Benefits to the Navy, the Public, and the Environment***

As a result of the TPS Port Angeles EA environmental planning efforts, the Navy mission supported by the TPS can continue in compliance with current crew requirements, while minimizing adverse impacts within the sensitive ecosystem of the action area in Port Angeles Harbor. Significant cultural and natural resources features of the project area will remain intact, and mitigation projects in the vicinity will improve habitat and the marine environment in the long term outlook for Port Angeles Harbor. Short term construction economic benefits will occur in the local area due to construction activities. The successful completion of this project has shown that project completion off Navy property can be achieved with strategic communication, consultation and coordination throughout the project.

#### ***Most Outstanding Accomplishments***

The most outstanding accomplishment was the completion of a complex EA, consultations and tribal agreements with Navy leadership, Tribes and regulators while ensuring the TPS Port Angeles EA addressed all stakeholder concerns from all involved with the project. The ability to manage multiple priorities for this project and successfully complete the Final EA (256 pages for EA and 511 pages of appendices), the MMPA application, the Biological Assessment, and Coastal Consistency Determination was an enormous team effort, but was completed and was able to be implemented to support construction contract award in September 2016.